

# BREAST CANCER

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Not all breast lumps are cancerous but if they are, early detection is the key to successful treatment.

In order to detect lumps, you should perform an annual breast self-exam right after your period. In addition to monthly breast exams, be sure to have an annual health exam which includes a breast check and pelvic exam by your medical provider. Your provider will recommend a baseline mammogram (x-rays for detecting lumps in the breast) for you at some point between ages 35 and 39. Your provider may schedule regular mammograms over the age of 40. If you are younger than 35, but discovered a lump or a problem, a mammogram may also be necessary. Mammograms are safe and only cause a small amount of discomfort.

## What if the mammogram is not normal?

1. When the medical specialist checks your mammograms, they will be reviewed for any possible lumps or irregularities which may be of concern.
2. Then, the specialist may recommend a second mammogram called a spot compression mammogram to get a better look at the problem.
3. At that point, a breast ultrasound (a test which uses waves to see inside the body) may also be done.
4. If the lump is still seen as a possible problem, a surgeon will check your breast and test results.

5. Finally, you may have a biopsy which will determine if the lump is cancerous or not. A biopsy is a procedure where a small amount of the breast tissue is removed, usually with a needle.

## If the Lump is Cancer

Cancer can be treated. The chances of successful treatment are better if the cancer was detected early. Your health care provider will explain what the best treatments are for you. They may include drugs, radiation and surgery. There is a possibility that the breast will have to be surgically removed. However, depending on the size of the cancer tumor and how early the cancer was detected, there may be other options for you.

## The Steps for Good Breast Health Care

- Eat a healthy diet and lose extra pounds if necessary.
- Use appropriate protection when working with toxic chemicals (or avoid them).
- Do your monthly breast self-examination.
- See your health care provider for your yearly breast and pelvic examination.
- Get mammograms as recommended.

The steps for good breast health care can help you regardless of yours or your family's history with breast cancer. Take some time to take care of yourself.